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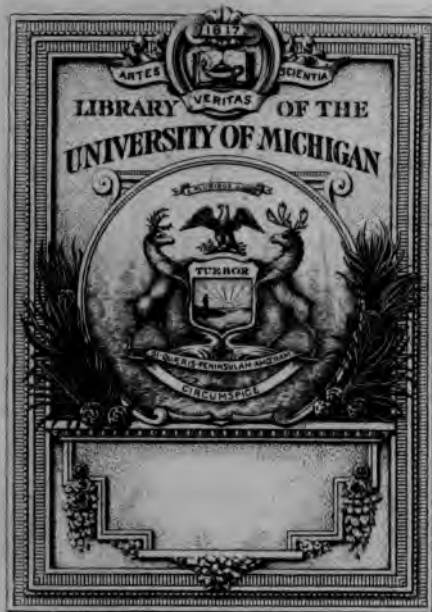
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Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám

THE LARK CLASSICS

Rubáiyát of ʿOmar Khayyám

Translated into English Verse
by Edward Fitzgerald



William Doxey
At the Sign of The Lark
San Francisco

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	PAGE
OMAR KHAÿYÁM (by Justin Huntly McCarthy)	7
GLOSE UPON A RUBÁ'ÍY (by Porter Garnett)	9
PREFACE	13
 OMAR KHAÿYÁM, THE ASTRONOMER-POET OF PERSIA (by Edward Fitzgerald)	19
RUBÁIYÁT OF OMAR KHAÿYÁM { <i>Fourth Edition</i>	41
{ <i>First Edition</i>	77
NOTES	105

Omar Khayyám

(By Justin Huntly McCarthy)

OMAR, dear Sultan of the Persian Song,
Familiar Friend whom I have loved so long,
 Whose volume made my pleasant hiding-place
From this fantastic world of Right and Wrong.

My Youth lies buried in thy verses: lo,
I read, and as the haunted numbers flow,
 My Memory turns in anguish to the Face
That leaned o'er Omar's pages long ago.

Alas for me, alas for all who weep
And wonder at the Silence dark and deep
 That girdles round this little Lamp in space
No wiser than when OMAR fell asleep.

Omar Khayyám

Rest in thy Grave beneath the crimson rain
Of heart-desiréd Roses. Life is vain,
And vain the trembling Legends we may trace
Upon the open Book that shuts again.

Glose upon a Rubá'iy

(By Porter Garnett)

"A BOOK OF VERSES UNDERNEATH THE BOUGH,
A JUG OF WINE, A LOAF OF BREAD—AND THOU
BESIDE ME SINGING IN THE WILDERNESS—
OH, WILDERNESS WERE PARADISE ENOW!"

OFT have the footsteps of my Soul been led
By Thee, sweet OMAR, far from hum of Toil
To where the Chenar trees their plumage spread
And tangly, wild grape-vines the thickest coil;
Where distant fields, scarce glimpsed in Noon content,
Are lush with verdure quick upon the Plough;
Where trills the Nightingale beneath the Tent
Of Heaven, uttering her soft lament;
There have I sat with Thee and conned ere now
A Book of Verses underneath the Bough.

Glose upon a Rubá'iy

When from the City's raucous din new-freed,
I quaff thy Wisdom from the clearing Cup
Of Rubáiyát, then, even as I read,
I seem with Thee in Persian Groves to sup
On Bread of YEZDAKHAST and SHIRAZ Wine,
That lifts the Net of Care from off the Brow.
These Words, that tongue the Spirit of the Vine,
Speak from the Veil, and lo! the Voice is thine:
Then is my Wish—would Fate that Wish allow—
A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread—and Thou.

Although I tread the Wilderness of Life,
Thy Song can waft me to that careless Clime,
Where enter in nor Memories of Strife,
Nor Ghosts of Woe from out the Gulf of Time.
There, by thy side, great OMAR, would I stray,
And drink the Juice that has forgot the Press.
(A Pot, the Potter shaped but Yesterday—
To-morrow will it be but broken Clay?)
With only Thee, the toilsome Road to bless,
Beside me singing in the Wilderness.

Glose upon a Rubá'iy

When Thou dost scorn the Waste and mourn the Rose,
That dies upon the World's too sinful Breast,
In thy Disdain a wondrous Beauty glows,
Unfolding Visions of a Life more blest.
Then from thy NAISHAPUR in KHORASAN
I seem to wander, though I know not how,
Within the glittering Gates of JENNISTAN,
Supreme SHADUKIAM I wondering scan :
Though still I walk the Wilderness, I vow—
Oh, Wilderness were Paradise enow !



Preface

. It was an occasion of no small moment to Mr. Fitzgerald's fame, and to the intellectual gratification of many thousands of readers, when he took his little packet of "Rubá'íyyát" to Mr. Quaritch in the latter part of the year 1858. It was printed as a small quarto pamphlet, bearing the publisher's name, but not the author's; and although apparently a complete failure at first,—a failure which Mr. Fitzgerald regretted less on his own account than on that of his publisher, to whom he had generously made a present of the book,—received, nevertheless, a sufficient distribution by being quickly reduced from the price of five shillings and placed in the box of cheap books marked a penny each. Thus forced into circulation, the two hundred copies which had been printed were soon exhausted. Among the buyers were Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Mr. Swinburne, Captain (Sir Richard) Burton, and

Preface

Mr. William Simpson, the accomplished artist of the *Illustrated London News*. The influence exercised by the first three, especially by Rossetti, upon a clique of young men who have since grown to distinction, was sufficient to attract observation to the singular beauties of the poem anonymously translated from the Persian. Most readers had no possible opportunity of discovering whether it was a disguised original or an actual translation;—even Captain Burton enjoyed probably but little chance of seeing a manuscript of the Persian “Rubá’iyyát.” The Oriental imagery and allusions were too thickly scattered through the verses to favour the notion that they could be the original work of an Englishman; yet it was shrewdly suspected by most of the appreciative readers that the “translator” was substantially the author and creator of the poem. In the refuge of his anonymity, Fitzgerald derived an innocent gratification from the curiosity that was aroused on all sides. After the first edition had disappeared, inquiries for the little book became frequent, and in the year 1868 he gave the MS. of his second edition to Mr. Quaritch, and the “Rubá’iyyát” came into circulation once more, but with several alterations and additions, by which the number of stanzas was somewhat increased beyond the original seventy-

Preface

five. Most of the changes were, as might have been expected, improvements; but in some instances the author's taste or caprice was at fault,—notably in the first *Rubá'iy*. His fastidious desire to avoid anything that seemed *baroque* or unnatural, or appeared like plagiarism, may have influenced him; but it was probably because he had already used the idea in his rendering of Jámí's "Salámán," that he sacrificed a fine and novel piece of imagery in his first stanza and replaced it by one of much more ordinary character. If it were from a dislike to pervert his original too largely, he had no need to be so scrupulous, since he dealt on the whole with the "Rubá'iyát" as though he had the licence of absolute authorship, changing, transposing, and manipulating the substance of the Persian quatrains with singular freedom. The vogue of "Old Omar" (as he would affectionately call his work) went on increasing, and American readers took it up with eagerness. In those days, the mere mention of Omar Khay-yám between two strangers meeting fortuitously acted like a sign of freemasonry, and established frequently a bond of friendship. Some curious instances of this have been related. A remarkable feature of the Omar-cult in the United States was the circumstance that single individuals bought numbers

Preface

of copies for gratuitous distribution before the book was reprinted in America. Its editions have been relatively numerous, when we consider how restricted was the circle of readers who could understand the peculiar beauties of the work. A third edition appeared in 1872, with some further alterations, and may be regarded as virtually the author's final revision, for it hardly differs at all from the text of the fourth edition, which appeared in 1879.

M. K.

Omar Khayyám
the Astronomer - Poet
of Persia

—



Omar Khayyám the Astronomer-Poet of Persia

(By Edward Fitzgerald)

OMAR KHAYYÁM was born at Naishápúr in Khorassán in the latter half of our Eleventh, and died within the First Quarter of our Twelfth Century. The slender Story of his Life is curiously twined about that of two other very considerable Figures in their Time and Country: one of whom tells the Story of all Three. This was Nizám ul Mulk, Vizyr to Alp Arslan the Son, and Malik Shah the Grandson, of Toghrul Beg the Tartar, who had wrested Persia from the feeble successor of Mahmúd the Great, and founded that Seljukian Dynasty which finally roused Europe into the Crusades. This Nizám ul Mulk, in his *Wasiyat*—or *Testament*—which he wrote and left as a Memorial for future Statesmen—relates the following, as quoted in the *Calcutta Review*, No. 59, from Mirkhond's History of the Assassins.

Omar Khayyám

“One of the greatest of the wise men of Khorassán was the Imám Mowaffak of Naishápúr, a man highly honoured and revered,—may God rejoice his soul; his illustrious years exceeded eighty-five, and it was the universal belief that every boy who read the Korán or studied the traditions in his presence, would assuredly attain to honour and happiness. For this cause did my father send me from Tús to Naishápúr with Abd-us-samad, the doctor of law, that I might employ myself in study and learning under the guidance of that illustrious teacher. Towards me he ever turned an eye of favour and kindness, and as his pupil I felt for him extreme affection and devotion, so that I passed four years in his service. When I first came there, I found two other pupils of mine own age newly arrived, Hakim Omar Khayyám and the ill-fated Ben Sabbáh. Both were endowed with sharpness of wit and the highest natural powers; and we three formed a close friendship together. When the Imám rose from his lectures, they used to join me and we repeated to each other the lessons we had heard. Now Omar was a native of Naishápúr, while Hasan and Sabbáh's father was one Ali, a man of austere life and practice, but heretical in his creed and doctrine. One day He

The Astronomer-Poet of Persia

'said to me and to Khayyám, 'It is a universal belief that the pupils of the Imám Mowaffak will attain to fortune. Now, even if we *all* do not attain thereto, without doubt one of us will; what then shall be our mutual pledge and bond?' We answered, 'Be it what you please.' 'Well,' he said, 'let us make a vow, that to whomsoever this fortune falls, he shall share it equally with the rest, and reserve no pre-eminence for himself.' 'Be it so,' we both replied, and on those terms we mutually pledged our words. Years rolled on, and I went from Khorassán to Transoxiana, and wandered to Ghazni and Cabul; and when I returned I was invested with office, and rose to be administrator of affairs during the Sultanate of Sultan Alp Arslán.'

"He goes on to state, that years passed by, and both his old school-friends found him out, and came and claimed a share in his good fortune, according to the school-day vow. The Vizier was generous and kept his word. Hasan demanded a place in the government, which the Sultan granted at the Vizier's request; but discontented with a gradual rise, he plunged into the maze of intrigue of an oriental court, and, failing in a base attempt to supplant his benefactor, he was disgraced and fell. After many mishaps and wanderings,

Omar Khayyám

Hasan became the head of the Persian sect of the *Ismailians*, — a party of fanatics who had long murmured in obscurity, but rose to an evil eminence under the guidance of his strong and evil will. In A. D. 1090, he seized the castle of Alamút, in the province of Rúdbar, which lies in the mountainous tract south of the Caspian Sea; and it was from this mountain home he obtained that evil celebrity among the Crusaders as the OLD MAN OF THE MOUNTAINS, and spread terror through the Mohammedan world; and it is yet disputed whether the word *Assassin*, which they have left in the language of modern Europe as their dark memorial, is derived from the *hashish*, or opiate of hemp-leaves (the Indian *bhang*), with which they maddened themselves to the sullen pitch of oriental desperation, or from the name of the founder of the dynasty, whom we have seen in his quiet collegiate days, at Naishápúr. One of the countless victims of the Assassin's dagger was Nizám-ul-Mulk himself, the old school-boy friend.*

*Some of Omar's Rubáiyát warn us of the danger of Greatness, the instability of Fortune, and while advocating Charity to all Men, recommending us to be too intimate with none. Attár makes Nizám-ul-Mulk use the very words of his friend Omar [Rub. xxviii.], "When Nizám-ul-Mulk was in the Agony (of Death) he said, 'Oh God! I am passing away in the hand of the Wind.'"

The Astronomer-Poet of Persia

"Omar Khayyám also came to the Vizier to claim his share ; but not to ask for title or office. 'The greatest boon you can confer on me,' he said, 'is to let me live in a corner under the shadow of your fortune, to spread wide the advantages of Science, and pray for your long life and prosperity.' The Vizier tells us, that, when he found Omar was really sincere in his refusal, he pressed him no further, but granted him a yearly pension of 1200 *mithkâls* of gold, from the treasury of Naishápúr.

"At Naishápúr thus lived and died Omar Khayyám, 'busied,' adds the Vizier, 'in winning knowledge of every kind, and especially in Astronomy, wherein he attained to a very high pre-eminence. Under the Sultanate of Malik Shah, he came to Merv, and attained great praise for his proficiency in science, and the Sultan showered favours upon him.'

"When Malik Shah determined to reform the calendar, Omar was one of the eight learned men employed to do it; the result was the *Jalâli* era (so called from *Jalâl-ud-din*, one of the king's names)—'a computation of time,' says Gibbon, 'which surpasses the Julian, and approaches the accuracy of the Gregorian style.' He is also the author of some astronomical tables, entitled *Zîjî-Malikshâhî*," and

Omar Khayyám

the French have lately republished and translated an Arabic Treatise of his on Algebra.

“His Takhallus or poetical name (Khayyám) signifies a Tent-maker, and he is said to have at one time exercised that trade, perhaps before Nizám-ul-Mulk’s generosity raised him to independence. Many Persian poets similarly derive their names from their occupations; thus we have Attár, ‘a druggist,’ Assár, ‘an oil presser,’ etc.* Omar himself alludes to his name in the following whimsical lines:—

‘Khayyám, who stitched the tents of science,
Has fallen in grief’s furnace and been suddenly burned;
The shears of Fate have cut the tent ropes of his life,
And the broker of Hope has sold him for nothing!’

“We have only one more anecdote to give of his Life, and that relates to the close; it is told in the anonymous preface which is sometimes prefixed to his poems; it has been printed in the Persian in the Appendix to Hyde’s *Veterum Persarum Religio*, p. 499; and D’Herbelot alludes to it in his *Bibliothèque*, under *Khiam*:—†

* Though all these, like our Smiths, Archers, Millers, Fletchers, etc., may simply retain the Surname of a hereditary calling.

† “Philosophe Musulman qui a vécu en Odeur de Sainteté dans sa Religion,

The Astronomer-Poet of Persia

"It is written in the chronicles of the ancients that this King of the Wise, Omar Khayyám, died at Naishápúr in the year of the Hegira, 517 (A.D. 1123); in science he was unrivalled—the very paragon of his age. Khwájah Nizámi of Samarcand, who was one of his pupils, relates the following story: 'I often used to hold conversations with my teacher, Omar Khayyám, in a garden; and one day he said to me, 'My tomb shall be in a spot where the north wind may scatter roses over it.' I wondered at the words he spake, but I knew that his were no idle words.* Years after, when

vers la Fin du premier et le Commencement du second Siècle," no part of which, except the "Philosophe," can apply to our Khayyám.

* The Rashness of the Words, according to D'Herbelot, consisted in being so opposed to those in the Korán: "No Man knows where he shall die!"—This story of Omar reminds me of another so naturally—and when one remembers how wide of his humble mark the noble sailor aimed—so pathetically told by Captain Cook—not by Doctor Hawkesworth—in his Second Voyage (i. 374). When leaving Ulitea, "Oreo's last request was for me to return. When he saw he could not obtain that promise, he asked the name of my *Marai* (burying-place). As strange a question as this was, I hesitated not a moment to tell him 'Stepney,' the parish in which I live when in London. I was made to repeat it several times over till they could pronounce it; and then 'Stepney Marai no Toote' was echoed through an hundred mouths at once. I afterwards found the same question had been put to Mr. Forster by a man on shore; but he gave a different, and indeed more proper answer, by saying, 'No man who used the sea could say where he should be buried.'"

Omar Khayyám

‘ I chanced to visit Naishápúr, I went to his final resting-place,
‘ and lo! it was just outside a garden, and trees laden with
‘ fruit stretched their boughs over the garden wall, and dropped
‘ their flowers upon his tomb, so that the stone was hidden
‘ under them.’ ”

Thus far — without fear of Trespass — from the *Calcutta Review*. The writer of it, on reading in India this story of Omar’s Grave, was reminded, he says, of Cicero’s Account of finding Archimedes’ Tomb at Syracuse, buried in grass and weeds. I think Thórwaldsen desired to have roses grow over him; a wish religiously fulfilled for him to the present day, I believe. However, to return to Omar.

Though the Sultan “shower’d Favours upon him,” Omar’s Epicurean Audacity of Thought and Speech caused him to be regarded askance in his own Time and Country. He is said to have been especially hated and dreaded by the Súfis, whose Practice he ridiculed, and whose Faith amounts to little more than his own, when stript of the Mysticism and formal recognition of Islamism under which Omar would not hide. Their Poets, including Háfiz, who are (with the exception of Firdausi) the most considerable in Persia, borrowed largely, indeed, of Omar’s material, but turning it to a mystical Use

The Astronomer-Poet of Persia

more convenient to Themselves and the People they addressed; a People quite as quick of Doubt as of Belief; as keen of Bodily Sense as of Intellectual; and delighting in a cloudy composition of both, in which they could float luxuriously between Heaven and Earth, and this World and the Next, on the wings of a poetical expression, that might serve indifferently for either. Omar was too honest of Heart as well as of Head for this. Having failed (however mistakenly) of finding any Providence but Destiny, and any World but This, he set about making the most of it; preferring rather to soothe the Soul through the Senses into Acquiescence with Things as he saw them, than to perplex it with vain disquietude after what they *might* be. It has been seen, however, that his Worldly Ambition was not exorbitant; and he very likely takes a humorous or perverse pleasure in exalting the gratification of Sense above that of the Intellect, in which he must have taken great delight, although it failed to answer the Questions in which he, in common with all men, was most vitally interested.

For whatever Reason, however, Omar, as before said, has never been popular in his own Country, and therefore has been but scantily transmitted abroad. The MSS. of his Poems,

Omar Khayyám

mutilated beyond the average. Casualties of Oriental description, are so rare in the East as scarce to have reached Westward at all, in spite of all the acquisitions of Arms and Science. There is no copy at the India House, none at the Bibliothèque Nationale of Paris. We know of but one in England: No. 140 of the Ouseley MSS. at the Bodleian, written at Shiráz, A. D. 1460. This contains but 158 Rubáiyat. One in the Asiatic Society's Library at Calcutta (of which we have a Copy), contains (and yet incomplete) 516, thus swelled to that by all kinds of Repetition and Corruption. So Von Hammer speaks of *his* Copy as containing about 500, while Dr. Sprenger catalogues the Lucknow MS. at that number.* The Scribes, too, of the Oxford and Cambridge MSS. seem to do their Work under a sort of Protest; beginning with a Tetrastich (whether genuine or not), out of its alphabetical order; the Oxford with one of Apollonius, the Calcutta with one of Expostulation, supposed (says a Note prefixed to the MS.) to have arisen from a Dream, in

* "Since this paper was written" (adds the Reviewer in a note), "we have met with a Copy of a very rare Edition, printed at Calcutta in 1836. It contains 438 Tetrastichs, with an Appendix containing 54 others not found in some MSS."

The Astronomer-Poet of Persia

Omar's mother asked about his future fate. It may be rendered thus: —

“Oh Thou who burn'st in Heart for those who burn
In Hell, whose fires thyself shall feed in turn;
How long be crying, 'Mercy on them, God!'
Why, who art Thou to teach, and He to learn?”

The Bodleian Quatrain pleads Pantheism by way of Justification.

“If I myself upon a looser Creed
Have loosely strung the Jewel of Good deed,
Let this one thing for my Atonement plead:
That One for Two I never did mis-read.”

The Reviewer,* to whom I owe the Particulars of Omar's Life, concludes his Review by comparing him with Lucretius, both as to natural Temper and Genius, and as acted upon by the Circumstances in which he lived. Both indeed were men of subtle, strong, and cultivated Intellect, fine Imagination, and Hearts passionate for Truth and Justice; who justly revolted from their Country's false Religion, and false, or foolish, Devotion to it; but who fell short of replacing what they subverted by such better *Hope* as others, with no better

* Professor Cowell.

Omar Khayyám

Revelation to guide them, had yet made a Law to themselves. Lucretius, indeed, with such material as Epicurus furnished, satisfied himself with the theory of a vast machine fortuitously constructed, and acting by a Law that implied no Legislator; and so composing himself into a Stoical rather than Epicurean severity of Attitude, sat down to contemplate the mechanical Drama of the Universe which he was part Actor in; himself and all about him (as in his own sublime description of the Roman Theatre) discoloured with the lurid reflex of the Curtain suspended between the Spectator and the Sun. Omar, more desperate, or more careless of any so complicated System as resulted in nothing but hopeless Necessity, flung his own Genius and Learning with a bitter or humorous jest into the general Ruin which their insufficient glimpses only served to reveal; and, pretending sensual pleasure as the serious purpose of Life, only *diverted* himself with speculative problems of Deity, Destiny, Matter and Spirit, Good and Evil, and other such questions, easier to start than to run down, and the pursuit of which becomes a very weary sport at last!

With regard to the present Translation. The original Rubáiyát (as, missing an Arabic Guttural, these *Tetrastichs* are more musically called) are independent Stanzas, consisting each

The Astronomer-Poet of Persia

of four Lines of equal, though varied, Prosody; sometimes all rhyming, but oftener (as here imitated) the third line a blank. Somewhat as in the Greek Alcaic, where the penultimate line seems to lift and suspend the Wave that falls over in the last. As usual with such kind of Oriental Verse, the Rubáiyát follow one another according to Alphabetic Rhyme — a strange succession of Grave and Gay. Those here selected are strung into something of an Eclogue, with perhaps a less than equal proportion of the "Drink and make-merry," which (genuine or not) recurs over-frequently in the Original. Either way, the Result is sad enough: saddest perhaps when most ostentatiously merry: more apt to move Sorrow than Anger toward the old Tent-maker, who, after vainly endeavouring to unshackle his Steps from Destiny, and to catch some authentic Glimpse of To-morrow, fell back upon To-day (which has outlasted so many To-morrows!) as the only Ground he had got to stand upon, however momentarily slipping from under his Feet.

Omar Khayyám

[From the Third Edition.]

While the second Edition of this version of Omar was preparing, Monsieur Nicolas, French Consul at Resht, published a very careful and very good Edition of the Text, from a lithograph copy at Teheran, comprising 464 Rubáiyát, with translation and notes of his own.

Mons. Nicolas, whose Edition has reminded me of several things, and instructed me in others, does not consider Omar to be the material Epicurean that I have literally taken him for, but a Mystic, shadowing the Deity under the figure of Wine, Wine-bearer, &c., as Háfiz is supposed to do; in short, a Súfí Poet like Háfiz and the rest.

I cannot see reason to alter my opinion, formed as it was more than a dozen years ago* when Omar was first shown me by one to whom I am indebted for all I know of Oriental, and very much other, literature. He admired Omar's Genius so much, that he would gladly have adopted any such Interpretation of his meaning as Mons. Nicolas' if he could.† That

* [This was written in 1868.]

† Perhaps would have edited the Poems himself some years ago. He may now as little approve of my Version on one side, as of Mons. Nicolas' Theory on the other.

The Astronomer-Poet of Persia

he could not, appears by his Paper in the *Calcutta Review* already so largely quoted; in which he argues from the Poems themselves, as well as from what records remain of the Poet's Life.

And if more were needed to disprove Mons. Nicolas' Theory, there is the Biographical Notice which he himself has drawn up in direct contradiction to the Interpretation of the Poems given in his Notes. (See pp. xiii-xiv of his Preface.) Indeed I hardly knew poor Omar was so far gone till his Apologist informed me. For here we see that, whatever were the Wine that Háfiz drank and sang, the veritable Juice of the Grape it was which Omar used, not only when carousing with his friends, but (says Mons. Nicolas) in order to excite himself to that pitch of Devotion which others reached by cries and "hurlemens." And yet, whenever Wine, Wine-bearer, &c., occur in the text—which is often enough—Mons. Nicolas carefully annotates "Dieu," "La Divinité," &c.: so carefully indeed that one is tempted to think that he was indoctrinated by the Súfi with whom he read the Poems. (Note to Rub. ii. p. 8.) A Persian would naturally wish to vindicate a distinguished Countryman; and a Súfi to enrol him in his own sect, which already comprises all the chief Poets of Persia.

Omar Khayyám

What historical Authority has Mons. Nicolas to show that Omar gave himself up "avec passion à l'étude de la philosophie des Soufis"? (Preface, p. xiii.) The Doctrines of Pantheism, Materialism, Necessity, &c., were not peculiar to the Súfi; nor to Lucretius before them; nor to Epicurus before him; probably the very original Irreligion of Thinking men from the first; and very likely to be the spontaneous growth of a Philosopher living in an Age of social and political barbarism, under shadow of one of the Two and Seventy Religions supposed to divide the world. Von Hammer (according to Sprenger's Oriental Catalogue) speaks of Omar as "a Free-thinker, and a *great opponent of Sufism*;" perhaps because, while holding much of their Doctrine, he would not pretend to any inconsistent severity of morals. Sir W. Ouseley has written a note to something of the same effect on the fly-leaf of the Bodleian MS. And in two Rubáiyát of Mons. Nicolas' own Edition Súf and Súfi are both disparagingly named.

No doubt many of these Quatrains seem unaccountable unless mystically interpreted; but many more as unaccountable unless literally. Were the Wine spiritual, for instance, how wash the Body with it when dead? Why make cups of the

The Astronomer-Poet of Persia

dead clay to be filled with—"La Divinité"—by some succeeding Mystic? Mons. Nicolas himself is puzzled by some "bizarres" and "trop Orientales" allusions and images—"d'une sensualité quelquefois révoltante" indeed—which "les convenances" do not permit him to translate; but still which the reader cannot but refer to "La Divinité."* No doubt also many of the Quatrains in the Teheran, as in the Calcutta, Copies are spurious; such *Rubaiyat* being the common form of Epigram in Persia. But this, at best, tells as much one way as another; nay, the Súfi, who may be considered the Scholar and Man of Letters in Persia, would be far more likely than the careless Epicure to interpolate what favours his own view of the Poet. I observe that very few of the more mystical Quatrains are in the Bodleian MS., which must be one

* A Note to Quatrain 234 admits that, however clear the mystical meaning of such Images must be to Europeans, they are not quoted without "rougissant" even by laymen in Persia—"Quant aux termes de tendresse qui commencent ce quatrain, comme tant d'autres dans ce recueil, nos lecteurs, habitués maintenant à l'étrangeté des expressions si souvent employés par Khéyam pour rendre ses pensées sur l'amour divin, et à la singularité de ses images trop orientales, d'une sensualité quelquefois révoltante, n'auront pas de peine à se persuader qu'il s'agit de la Divinité, bien que cette conviction soit vivement discutée par les mollahs musulmans et même par beaucoup de laïques, qui rougissent véritablement d'une pareille licence de leur compatriote à l'égard des choses spirituelles."

Omar Khayyám

of the oldest, as dated at Shiráz, A.H. 865, A.D. 1460. And this, I think, especially distinguishes Omar (I cannot help calling him by his—no, not Christian—familiar name) from all other Persian Poets: That, whereas with them the Poet is lost in his Song, the Man in Allegory and Abstraction; we seem to have the Man—the *Bonhomme*—Omar himself, with all his Humours and Passions, as frankly before us as if we were really at Table with him, after the Wine had gone round.

I must say that I, for one, never wholly believed in the Mysticism of Háfiz. It does not appear there was any danger in holding and singing Súfi Pantheism, so long as the Poet made his Salaam to Mohammed at the beginning and end of his Song. Under such conditions Jeláluddín, Jámí, Attár, and others sang; using Wine and Beauty indeed as Images to illustrate, not as a Mask to hide, the Divinity they were celebrating. Perhaps some Allegory less liable to mistake or abuse had been better among so inflammable a People: much more so when, as some think with Háfiz and Omar, the abstract is not only likened to, but identified with, the sensual Image; hazardous, if not to the Devotee himself, yet to his weaker Brethren; and worse for the Profane in proportion as the Devotion of the Initiated grew warmer. And all for what?

The Astronomer - Poet of Persia

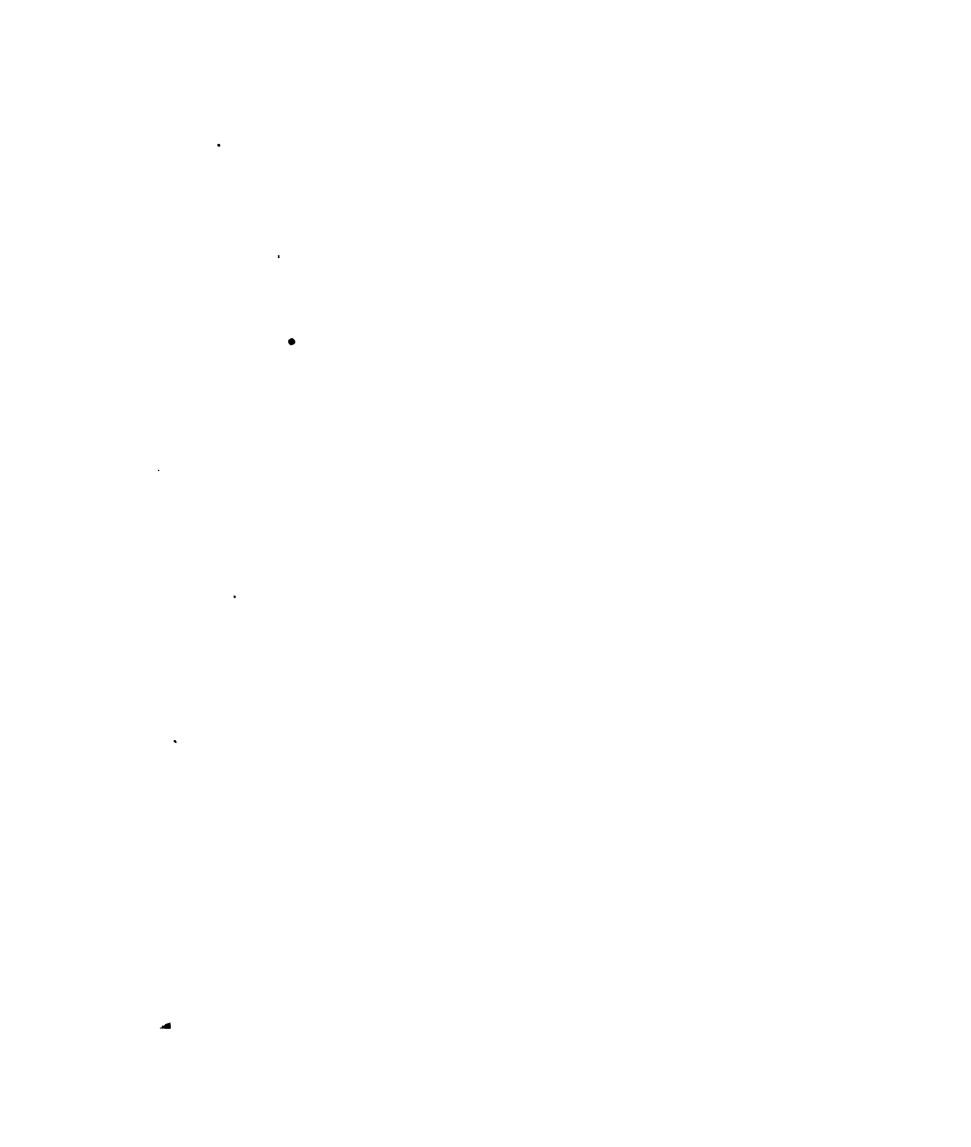
To be tantalized with Images of sensual enjoyment which must be renounced if one would approximate a God, who, according to the Doctrine, *is* Sensual Matter as well as Spirit, and into whose Universe one expects unconsciously to merge after Death, without hope of any posthumous Beatitude in another world to compensate for all one's self-denial in this. Lucretius' blind Divinity certainly merited, and probably got, as much self-sacrifice as this of the Súfi; and the burden of Omar's Song—if not "Let us eat"—is assuredly—"Let us drink, for To-morrow we die!" And if Háfiz meant quite otherwise by a similar language, he surely miscalculated when he devoted his Life and Genius to so equivocal a Psalmody as, from his Day to this, has been said and sung by any rather than Spiritual Worshippers.

However, as there is some traditional presumption, and certainly the opinion of some learned men, in favour of Omar's being a Súfi—and even something of a Saint—those who please may so interpret his Wine and Cup-bearer. On the other hand, as there is far more historical certainty of his being a Philosopher, of scientific Insight and Ability far beyond that of the Age and Country he lived in; of such moderate worldly Ambition as becomes a Philosopher, and such moderate

Omar Khayyám

wants as rarely satisfy a Debauchee; other readers may be content to believe with me that, while the Wine Omar celebrates is simply the Juice of the Grape, he bragged more than he drank of it, in very defiance perhaps of that Spiritual Wine which left its Votaries sunk in Hypocrisy or Disgust.

Rubáiyát
of
Omar Khayyám of Naishápúr



Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám

[*Fourth Edition*]

I

WAKE! For the Sun who scatter'd into flight
The Stars before him from the Field of Night,
Drives Night along with them from Heav'n, and strikes
The Sultán's Turret with a Shaft of Light.

II

Before the phantom of False morning died,
Methought a Voice within the Tavern cried,
"When all the Temple is prepared within,
Why nods the drowsy Worshipper outside?"

Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám FOUR

III

And, as the Cock crew, those who stood before
The Tavern shouted—"Open then the Door!

 You know how little while we have to stay,
And, once departed, may return no more."

IV

Now the New Year reviving old Desires,
The thoughtful Soul to Solitude retires,
 Where the WHITE HAND OF MOSES on the Bou
Puts out, and Jesus from the ground suspires.

V

Iram indeed is gone with all his Rose,
And Jamshyd's Sev'n-ring'd Cup where no one know
 But still a Ruby kindles in the Vine,
And many a Garden by the Water blows.

EDITION **Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám**

VI

And David's lips are lockt; but in divine
High-piping Pehleví, with "Wine! Wine! Wine!
Red Wine!"—the Nightingale cries to the Rose
That sallow cheek of hers to' incarnadine.

VII

Come, fill the Cup, and in the fire of Spring
Your Winter-garment of Repentance fling:
The Bird of Time has but a little way
To flutter—and the Bird is on the Wing.

VIII

Whether at Naishápúr or Babylon,
Whether the Cup with sweet or bitter run,
The Wine of Life keeps oozing drop by drop,
The Leaves of Life keep falling one by one.

IX

Each Morn a thousand Roses brings, you say ;
Yes, but where leaves the Rose of Yesterday ?

And this first Summer month that brings the Rose
Shall take Jamshyd and Kaikobád away.

X

Well, let it take them ! What have we to do
With Kaikobád the Great, or Kaikhosrú ?

Let Zál and Rustum bluster as they will,
Or Hátim call to Supper—heed not you.

XI

With me along the strip of Herbage strewn
That just divides the desert from the sown,

Where name of Slave and Sultán is forgot—
And Peace to Mahmúd on his golden Throne !

XII

/ A Book of Verses underneath the Bough,
A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread—and Thou
Beside me singing in the Wilderness—
Oh, Wilderness were Paradise enow!

XIII

Some for the Glories of this World; and some
Sigh for the Prophet's Paradise to come;
Ah, take the Cash, and let the Credit go,
Nor heed the rumble of a distant Drum!

XIV

Look to the blowing Rose about us—"Lo,
Laughing," she says, "into the world I blow,
At once the silken tassel of my Purse
Tear, and its Treasure on the Garden throw."

Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám

FOURTH

XV

And those who husbanded the Golden grain,
And those who flung it to the winds like Rain,
Alike to no such aureate Earth are turn'd
As, buried once, Men want dug up again.

XVI

The Worldly Hope men set their Hearts upon
Turns Ashes—or it prospers; and anon,
Like Snow upon the Desert's dusty Face,
Lighting a little hour or two—was gone.

XVII

Think, in this batter'd Caravanseraï
Whose Portals are alternate Night and Day,
How Sultán after Sultán with his Pomp
Abode his destin'd Hour, and went his way.

XVIII

✓
They say the Lion and the Lizard keep
The Courts where Jamshyd gloried and drank deep :
And Bahrá'm, that great Hunter — the Wild Ass
Stamps o'er his Head, but cannot break his Sleep.

XIX

✓
I sometimes think that never blows so red
The Rose as where some buried Cæsar bled ;
That every Hyacinth the Garden wears
Dropt in her Lap from some once lovely Head.

XX

✓
And this reviving Herb whose tender Green
Fledges the River-Lip on which we lean —
Ah, lean upon it lightly ! for who knows
From what once lovely Lip it springs unseen !

XXI

Ah, my Belovéd, fill the Cup that clears
 To-DAY of past Regret and future Fears:
 To-morrow!—Why, To-morrow I may be
 Myself with Yesterday's Sev'n thousand Years.

XXII

For some we loved, the loveliest and the best
 That from his Vintage rolling Time hath prest,
 Have drunk their Cup a Round or two before,
 And one by one crept silently to rest.

XXIII

And we that now make merry in the Room
 They left, and Summer dresses in new bloom,
 Ourselves must we beneath the Couch of Earth
 Descend—ourselves to make a Couch—for whom?

XXIV

Ah, make the most of what we yet may spend,
Before we too into the Dust descend ;
Dust into Dust, and under Dust, to lie,
Sans Wine, sans Song, sans Singer, and — sans End !

XXV

Alike for those who for TO-DAY prepare,
And those that after some TO-MORROW stare,
A Muezzín from the Tower of Darkness cries,
“Fools ! your Reward is neither Here nor There.”

XXVI

Why, all the Saints and Sages who discuss'd
Of the two Worlds so wisely — they are thrust
Like foolish Prophets forth ; their Words to Scorn
Are scatter'd, and their Mouths are stopt with Dust.

Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám

FOURTH

XXVII

Myself when young did eagerly frequent
Doctor and Saint, and heard great argument
About it and about: but evermore
Came out by the same door where in I went.

XXVIII

With them the seed of Wisdom did I sow,
And with mine own hand wrought to make it grow;
And this was all the Harvest that I reap'd—
“I came like Water, and like Wind I go.”

XXIX

Into this Universe, and *Why* not knowing
Nor *Whence*, like Water willy-nilly flowing;
And out of it, as Wind along the Waste,
I know not *Whither*, willy-nilly blowing.

XXX

What, without asking, hither hurried *Whence*?
And, without asking, *Whither* hurried hence!
Oh, many a Cup of this forbidden Wine
Must drown the memory of that insolence!

XXXI

Up from Earth's Centre through the Seventh Gate
I rose, and on the Throne of Saturn sate,
And many a Knot unravel'd by the Road;
But not the Master-knot of Human Fate.

XXXII

There was the Door to which I found no Key;
There was the Veil through which I might not see;
Some little talk awhile of ME and THEE
There was—and then no more of THEE and ME.

Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám

FOURTH

XXXIII

Earth could not answer; nor the Seas that mourn
In flowing Purple, of their Lord forlorn;
Nor rolling Heaven, with all his Signs reveal'd
And hidden by the sleeve of Night and Morn.

XXXIV

Then of the THEE IN ME who works behind
The Veil, I lifted up my hands to find
A Lamp amid the Darkness; and I heard,
As from Without—"THE ME WITHIN THEE BLIND!"

XXXV

Then to the Lip of this poor earthen Urn
I lean'd, the Secret of my Life to learn:
And Lip to Lip it murmur'd—"While you live,
Drink!—for, once dead, you never shall return."

EDITION Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám

XXXVI

I think the Vessel, that with fugitive
Articulation answer'd, once did live,
 And drink ; and Ah ! the passive Lip I kiss'd,
How many Kisses might it take—and give !

XXXVII

For I remember stopping by the way
To watch a Potter thumping his wet Clay :
 And with its all-obliterated Tongue
It murmur'd —“Gently, Brother, gently, pray !”

XXXVIII

And has not such a Story from of Old
Down Man's successive generations roll'd
 Of such a clod of saturated Earth
Cast by the Maker into Human mould ?

XXXIX

And not a drop that from our Cups we throw
For Earth to drink of, but may steal below
 To quench the fire of Anguish in some Eye
There hidden — far beneath, and long ago.

XL

As then the Tulip for her morning sup
Of Heav'nly Vintage from the soil looks up,
 Do you devoutly do the like, till Heav'n
To Earth invert you — like an empty Cup.

XLI

Perplexed no more with Human or Divine,
To-morrow's tangle to the winds resign,
 And lose your fingers in the tresses of
The Cypress-slender Minister of Wine.

XLII

And if the Wine you drink, the Lip you press,
End in what All begins and ends in—Yes;

Think then you are TO-DAY what YESTERDAY
You were—TO-MORROW you shall not be less.

XLIII

So when the Angel of the darker Drink
At last shall find you by the river-brink,

And, offering his Cup, invite your Soul
Forth to your Lips to quaff—you shall not shrink.

XLIV

Why, if the Soul can fling the Dust aside,
And naked on the Air of Heaven ride,

Were't not a Shame—were't not a Shame for him
In this clay carcase crippled to abide?

Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám

FOUR

XLV

✓Tis but a Tent where takes his one day's rest
A Sultán to the realm of Death address ;
The Sultán rises, and the dark Ferrásh
Strikes, and prepares it for another Guest.

XLVI

And fear not lest Existence closing your
Account, and mine, should know the like no more ;
The Eternal Sáki from that Bowl has pour'd
Millions of Bubbles like us, and will pour.

XLVII

When You and I behind the Veil are past,
Oh, but the long, long while the World shall last,
Which of our Coming and Departure heeds
As the Sea's self should heed a pebble-cast.



XLVIII

A Moment's Halt—a momentary taste
Of BEING from the Well amid the Waste—

And Lo!—the phantom Caravan has reach'd
The NOTHING it set out from—Oh, make haste!

XLIX

Would you that spangle of Existence spend
About THE SECRET—quick about it, Friend!

A Hair perhaps divides the False and True;
And upon what, prithee, does life depend?

L

A Hair perhaps divides the False and True;
Yes; and a single Alif were the clue—

Could you but find it—to the Treasure-house,
And peradventure to THE MASTER too;

Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám

FOURTH

LI

Whose secret Presence, through Creation's veins
Running Quicksilver-like eludes your pains ;
 Taking all shapes from Máh to Máhi ; and
They change and perish all—but He remains ;

LII

A moment guess'd—then back behind the Fold
Immerst of Darkness round the Drama roll'd
 Which, for the Pastime of Eternity,
He doth Himself contrive, enact, behold.

LIII

But if in vain, down on the stubborn floor
Of Earth, and up to Heav'n's unopening Door,
 You gaze TO-DAY, while You are You—how then
TO-MORROW, You when shall be You no more ?

EDITION Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám

LIV

Waste not your Hour, nor in the vain pursuit
Of This and That endeavour and dispute ;
 Better be jocund with the fruitful Grape
Than sadden after none, or bitter, Fruit.

LV

You know, my Friends, with what a brave Carouse
I made a Second Marriage in my house ;
 Divorced old barren Reason from my Bed,
And took the Daughter of the Vine to Spouse.

LVI

For "Is" and "Is-NOT" though with Rule and Line,
And "UP-AND-DOWN" by Logic I define,
 Of all that one should care to fathom, I
Was never deep in anything but—Wine.

LVII

Ah, but my Computations, People say,
 Reduced the Year to better reckoning? — Nay,
 'Twas only striking from the Calendar
 Unborn To-morrow and dead Yesterday.

LVIII

And lately, by the Tavern Door agape,
 Came shining through the Dusk an Angel Shape
 Bearing a Vessel on his Shoulder; and
 He bid me taste of it; and 't was — the Grape!

LIX

The Grape that can with Logic absolute
 The Two-and-Seventy jarring Sects confute:
 The sovereign Alchémist that in a trice
 Life's leaden metal into Gold transmute:

LX

The mighty Mahmúd, Allah-breathing Lord,
That all the misbelieving and black Horde
Of Fears and Sorrows that infest the Soul
Scatters before him with his whirlwind Sword.

LXI

Why, be this Juice the growth of God, who dare
Blaspheme the twisted tendril as a Snare?
A Blessing, we should use it, should we not?
And if a Curse—why, then, Who set it there?

LXII

I must abjure the Balm of Life, I must,
Scared by some After-reckoning ta'en on trust,
Or lured with Hope of some Diviner Drink,
To fill the Cup—when crumbled into Dust!

Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám **FOURTH**

LXIII

Oh threats of Hell and Hopes of Paradise !
One thing at least is certain—*This* Life flies ;
One thing is certain and the rest is Lies ;
The Flower that once has blown for ever dies.

LXIV

✓ Strange, is it not ? that of the myriads who
Before us pass'd the door of Darkness through,
✗ Not one returns to tell us of the Road,
Which to discover we must travel too.

LXV

The Revelations of Devout and Learn'd
Who rose before us, and as Prophets burn'd,
Are all but Stories, which, awoke from Sleep
They told their comrades, and to Sleep return'd.

EDITION Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám

LXVI

I sent my Soul through the Invisible,
Some letter of that After-life to spell :
 And by and by my Soul return'd to me,
And answer'd "I Myself am Heav'n and Hell :"

✓

LXVII

Heav'n but the Vision of fulfill'd Desire,
And Hell the Shadow from a Soul on fire
 Cast on the Darkness into which Ourselves,
So late emerg'd from, shall so soon expire.

✓

LXVIII

We are no other than a moving row
Of Magic Shadow-shapes that come and go
 Round with the Sun-illumin'd Lantern held
In Midnight by the Master of the Show ;

Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám

FOURTH

LXIX

But helpless Pieces of the Game He plays
Upon this Chequer-board of Nights and Days :
 Hither and thither moves, and checks, and slays,
And one by one back in the Closet lays.

LXX

The Ball no question makes of Ayes and Noes,
But Here or There as strikes the Player goes ;
 And He that toss'd you down into the Field,
He knows about it all—HE knows—HE knows !

✓

LXXI

The Moving Finger writes ; and, having writ,
Moves on : nor all your Piety nor Wit
 Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it.

EDITION Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám

LXXII

And that inverted Bowl they call the Sky,
Whereunder crawling coop'd we live and die,
 Lift not your hands to *It* for help—for it
As impotently moves as you or I. ✓

LXXIII

With Earth's first Clay They did the Last Man knead,
And there of the Last Harvest sow'd the Seed:
 And the first Morning of Creation wrote
What the Last Dawn of Reckoning shall read.

LXXIV

YESTERDAY *This* Day's Madness did prepare;
TO-MORROW'S Silence, Triumph, or Despair: /
 Drink! for you know not whence you came, nor why:
Drink! for you know not why you go, nor where.

Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám **FOURTH**

LXXV

I tell you this—When, started from the Goal,
Over the flaming shoulders of the Foal
 Of Heav'n Parwán and Mushtarí they flung,
In my predestin'd Plot of Dust and Soul

LXXVI

The Vine had struck a fibre: which about
If clings my Being—let the Dervish flout;
 Of my Base metal may be filed a Key,
That shall unlock the Door he howls without.

LXXVII

And this I know: whether the one True Light
Kindle to Love, or Wrath-consume me quite,
 One flash of It within the Tavern caught
Better than in the Temple lost outright.

EDITION Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám

J

LXXVIII

What! out of senseless Nothing to provoke
A conscious Something to resent the yoke
Of unpermitted Pleasure, under pain
Of Everlasting Penalties, if broke!

J

LXXIX

What! from his helpless Creature be repaid
Pure Gold for what he lent him dross-allay'd—
Sue for a Debt we never did contract,
And cannot answer—Oh the sorry trade!

✓

LXXX

Oh Thou, who didst with pitfall and with gin
Beset the Road I was to wander in,
Thou wilt not with Predestin'd Evil round
Enmesh, and then impute my Fall to Sin!

Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám **FOURTH**

LXXXI

Oh Thou, who Man of baser Earth didst make,
And ev'n with Paradise devise the Snake:
For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man
Is blacken'd—Man's forgiveness give—and take!

* * * * *

LXXXII

As under cover of departing Day
Slunk hunger-stricken Ramazán away,
Once more within the Potter's house alone
I stood, surrounded by the Shapes of Clay.

LXXXIII

Shapes of all Sorts and Sizes, great and small,
That stood along the floor and by the wall ;
 And some loquacious vessels were ; and some
Listen'd perhaps, but never talk'd at all.

LXXXIV

Said one among them—"Surely not in vain
My substance of the common Earth was ta'en
 And to this Figure moulded, to be broke,
Or trampled back to shapeless Earth again."

LXXXV

Then said a Second—"Ne'er a peevish Boy
Would break the Bowl from which he drank in joy;
 And He that with his hand the Vessel made
Will surely not in after Wrath destroy."

LXXXVI

After a momentary silence spake
Some Vessel of a more ungainly make :
 “They sneer at me for leaning all awry :
What ! did the Hand then of the Potter shake ?”

LXXXVII

Whereat some one of the loquacious Lot—
I think a Súfi pipkin—waxing hot—
 “All this of Pot and Potter—Tell me then,
Who is the Potter, pray, and who the Pot ?”

LXXXVIII

“Why,” said another, “Some there are who tell
Of one who threatens he will toss to Hell
 The luckless Pots he marr’d in making—Pish !
He’s a Good Fellow, and ’t will all be well.”

LXXXIX

"Well," murmur'd one, "Let whoso make or buy,
My Clay with long Oblivion is gone dry :

But fill me with the old familiar Juice,
Methinks I might recover by and by."

XC

So while the Vessels one by one were speaking,
The little Moon look'd in that all were seeking :

And then they jogg'd each other, "Brother! Brother!
Now for the Porter's shoulder-knot a-creaking !"

* * * * *

XCI

Ah, with the Grape my fading Life provide,
And wash the Body whence the Life has died,
And lay me, shrouded in the living Leaf,
By some not unfrequented Garden-side.

XCII

That ev'n my buried Ashes such a snare
Of Vintage shall fling up into the Air
As not a True-believer passing by
But shall be overtaken unaware.

XCIII

Indeed the Idols I have loved so long
Have done my credit in this World much wrong :
Have drown'd my Glory in a shallow Cup,
And sold my Reputation for a Song.

XCIV

Indeed, indeed, Repentance oft before
I swore—but was I sober when I swore?
And then and then came Spring, and Rose-in-hand
My thread-bare Penitence apieces tore.

XCV

And much as Wine has play'd the Infidel,
And robb'd me of my Robe of Honour—Well,
I wonder often what the Vintners buy
One half so precious as the stuff they sell.



XCVI

Yet Ah, that Spring should vanish with the Rose!
That Youth's sweet-scented manuscript should close!
The Nightingale that in the branches sang,
Ah whence, and whither flown again, who knows!

Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám

FOURTH

XCVII

Would but the Desert of the Fountain yield
One glimpse—if dimly, yet indeed, reveal'd,
 To which the fainting Traveller might spring,
As springs the trampled herbage of the field!

XCVIII

Would but some wingéd Angel ere too late
Arrest the yet unfolded Roll of Fate,
 And make the stern Recorder otherwise
Enregister, or quite obliterate!

XCIX

Ah Love! could you and I with Him conspire
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
 Would not we shatter it to bits—and then
Re-mould it nearer to the Heart's desire!

EDITION Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám

* * * * * * *

C

Yon rising Moon that looks for us again—
How oft hereafter will she wax and wane;
 How oft hereafter rising look for us
Through this same Garden—and for *one* in vain!

CI

And when like her, oh Sáki, you shall pass
Among the Guests Star-scatter'd on the Grass,
 And in your joyous errand reach the spot
Where I made One—turn down an empty Glass!

TAMÁM

Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám

[*First Edition*]

I

AWAKE! for Morning in the Bowl of Night
Has flung the Stone that puts the Stars to Flight:
And Lo! the Hunter of the East has caught
The Sultán's Turret in a Noose of Light.

II

Dreaming, when Dawn's Left Hand was in the Sky,
I heard a Voice within the Tavern cry,
"Awake, my Little ones, and fill the Cup
Before Life's Liquor in its Cup be dry."

Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám

FIRST

III

And, as the Cock crew, those who stood before
The Tavern shouted—"Open then the Door!

You know how little while we have to stay,
And, once departed, may return no more."

IV

Now, the New Year reviving old Desires,
The thoughtful Soul to Solitude retires,

Where the WHITE HAND OF MOSES on the Bough
Puts out, and Jesus from the Ground suspires.

V

Iram indeed is gone with all its Rose,
And Jamshýd's Sev'n-ring'd Cup where no one knows;

But still the Vine her ancient Ruby yields,
And still a Garden by the Water blows.

VI

And David's Lips are lock't; but in divine
High piping Péhlevi, with "Wine! Wine! Wine!
Red Wine!"—the Nightingale cries to the Rose
That yellow Cheek of her's to' incarnadine.

VII

Come, fill the Cup, and in the Fire of Spring
The Winter Garment of Repentance fling:
The Bird of Time has but a little way
To fly—and Lo! the Bird is on the Wing.

VIII

And look—a thousand Blossoms with the Day
Woke—and a thousand scatter'd into Clay:
And this first Summer Month that brings the Rose
Shall take Jamshýd and Kaikobád away.

Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám

FIR

IX

But come with old Khayyám, and leave the Lot
Of Kaikobád and Kaikhosrú forgot :

Let Rustum lay about him as he will,
Or Hátim Tai cry Supper—heed them not.

X

With me along some Strip of Herbage strown
That just divides the desert from the sown,

Where name of Slave and Sultán scarce is knowr
And pity Sultán Mahmúd on his Throne.

XI

Here with a Loaf of Bread beneath the Bough,
A Flask of Wine, a Book of Verse—and Thou

Beside me singing in the Wilderness—
And Wilderness is Paradise enow.

EDITION Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám

XII

“How sweet is mortal Sovranty!”—think some:
Others—“How blest the Paradise to come!”

Ah, take the Cash in hand and waive the Rest;
Oh, the brave Music of a *distant* Drum!

XIII

Look to the Rose that blows about us—“Lo,
Laughing,” she says, “into the World I blow:
At once the silken Tassel of my Purse
Tear, and its Treasure on the Garden throw.”

XIV

The Worldly Hope men set their Hearts upon
Turns Ashes—or it prospers; and anon,
Like Snow upon the Desert’s dusty Face
Lighting a little Hour or two—is gone.

Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám

FIRST

XV

And those who husbanded the Golden Grain,
And those who flung it to the Winds like Rain,
Alike to no such aureate Earth are turn'd
As, buried once, Men want dug up again.

XVI

Think, in this batter'd Caravanserai
Whose Doorways are alternate Night and Day,
How Sultán after Sultán with his Pomp
Abode his Hour or two, and went his way.

XVII

They say the Lion and the Lizard keep
The Courts where Jamshýd gloried and drank deep:
And Bahrá́m, that great Hunter—the Wild Ass
Stamps o'er his Head, and he lies fast asleep.

XVIII

I sometimes think that never blows so red
The Rose as where some buried Cæsar bled;
 That every Hyacinth the Garden wears
Dropt in its Lap from some once lovely Head.

XIX

And this delightful Herb whose tender Green
Fledges the River's Lip on which we lean—
 Ah, lean upon it lightly! for who knows
From what once lovely Lip it springs unseen!

XX

Ah, my belovéd, fill the Cup that clears
TO-DAY of past Regrets and future Fears—
 To-morrow?—Why, To-morrow I may be
Myself with Yesterday's Sev'n Thousand Years.

XXI

Lo! some we loved, the loveliest and best
 That Time and Fate of all their Vintage prest,
 Have drunk their Cup a Round or two before,
 And one by one crept silently to Rest.

XXII

And we, that now make merry in the Room
 They left, and Summer dresses in new Bloom,
 Ourselves must we beneath the Couch of Earth
 Descend, ourselves to make a Couch—for whom?

XXIII

Ah, make the most of what we yet may spend,
 Before we too into the Dust descend;
 Dust into Dust, and under Dust, to lie,
 Sans Wine, sans Song, sans Singer, and—sans End!

XXIV

Alike for those who for TO-DAY prepare,
And those that after a TO-MORROW stare,
 A Muezzín from the Tower of Darkness cries
“Fools! your Reward is neither Here nor There!”

XXV

Why, all the Saints and Sages who discuss'd
Of the Two Worlds so learnedly, are thrust
 Like foolish Prophets forth; their Words to Scorn
Are scatter'd, and their Mouths are stopt with Dust.

XXVI

Oh, come with old Khayyám, and leave the Wise
To talk; one thing is certain, that Life flies;
 One thing is certain, and the Rest is Lies; ✕
The Flower that once has blown for ever dies.

XXVII

Myself when young did eagerly frequent
 Doctor and Saint, and heard great Argument
 About it and about: but evermore
 Came out by the same Door as in I went.

XXVIII

With them the Seed of Wisdom did I sow,
 And with my own hand labour'd it to grow:
 And this was all the Harvest that I reap'd—
 "I came like Water, and like Wind I go."

XXIX

Into this Universe, and *why* not knowing,
 Nor *whence*, like Water willy-nilly flowing:
 And out of it, as Wind along the Waste,
 I know not *whither*, willy-nilly blowing.

XXX

What, without asking, hither hurried *whence*?
And, without asking, *whither* hurried hence!
 Another and another Cup to drown
The Memory of this Impertinence!

XXXI

Up from Earth's Centre through the Seventh Gate
I rose, and on the Throne of Saturn sate,
 And many Knots unravel'd by the Road;
But not the Knot of Human Death and Fate.

XXXII

There was a Door to which I found no Key:
There was a Veil past which I could not see:
 Some little Talk awhile of ME and THEE
There seem'd—and then no more of THEE and ME.

Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám

FIRST

XXXIII

Then to the rolling Heav'n itself I cried,
Asking, "What Lamp had Destiny to guide
Her little Children stumbling in the Dark?"
And—"A blind Understanding!" Heav'n replied.

XXXIV

Then to this earthen Bowl did I adjourn
My Lip the secret Well of Life to learn:
And Lip to Lip it murmur'd—"While you live
Drink!—for once dead you never shall return."

XXXV

I think the Vessel, that with fugitive
Articulation answer'd, once did live,
And merry-make; and the cold Lip I kiss'd
How many Kisses might it take—and give!

XXXVI

For in the Market-place, one Dusk of Day,
I watch'd the Potter thumping his wet Clay :
And with its all obliterated Tongue
It murmur'd—"Gently, Brother, gently, pray !"

XXXVII

Ah, fill the Cup :—what boots it to repeat
How Time is slipping underneath our Feet :
Unborn TO-MORROW, and dead YESTERDAY,
Why fret about them if TO-DAY be sweet !

[From Preface:

Oh, if my soul can fling his Dust aside,
And naked on the Air of Heaven ride,
Is 't not a Shame, is 't not a Shame for Him
So long in this Clay Suburb to abide ?

Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám

FIRST

Or is *that* but a Tent, where rests anon
A Sultán to his Kingdom passing on,
And which the swarthy Chamberlain shall strike
Then when the Sultán rises to be gone?]

XXXVIII

One Moment in Annihilation's Waste,
One Moment, of the Well of Life to taste—
The Stars are setting and the Caravan
Starts for the Dawn of Nothing—Oh, make haste!

XXXIX

How long, how long, in infinite Pursuit
Of This and That endeavour and dispute?
Better be merry with the fruitful Grape,
Than sadden after none, or bitter, Fruit.

XL

You know, my Friends, how long since in my House
For a new Marriage I did make Carouse :

Divorced old barren Reason from my Bed,
And took the Daughter of the Vine to Spouse.

XLI

For "Is" and "Is-NOT" though *with* Rule and Line,
And "UP-AND-DOWN" *without*, I could define,

I yet in all I only cared to know,
Was never deep in anything but—Wine.

XLII

And lately, by the Tavern Door agape,
Came stealing through the Dusk an Angel Shape
Bearing a Vessel on his Shoulder ; and
He bid me taste of it ; and 't was—the Grape !

XLIII

The Grape that can with Logic absolute
The Two-and-Seventy jarring Sects confute :
 The subtle Alchemist that in a Trice
Life's leaden Metal into Gold transmute.

XLIV

The mighty Mahmúd, the victorious Lord,
That all the misbelieving and black Horde
 Of Fears and Sorrows that infest the Soul
Scatters and slays with his enchanted Sword.

XLV

But leave the Wise to wrangle, and with me
The Quarrel of the Universe let be :
 And, in some corner of the Hubbub coucht,
Make Game of that which makes as much of Thee.

XLVI

For in and out, above, about, below,
'T is nothing but a Magic Shadow-show,
 Play'd in a Box whose Candle is the Sun,
Round which we Phantom Figures come and go.

XLVII

And if the Wine you drink, the Lip you press,
End in the Nothing all Things end in—Yes—
 Then fancy while Thou art, Thou art but what
Thou shalt be—Nothing—Thou shalt not be less.

XLVIII

While the Rose blows along the River Brink,
With old Khayyám the Ruby Vintage drink :
 And when the Angel with his darker Draught
Draws up to Thee—take that, and do not shrink.

Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám

FIRST

XLIX

'Tis all a Chequer-board of Nights and Days
 Where Destiny with Men for Pieces plays:
 Hither and thither moves, and mates, and stays,
 And one by one back in the Closet lays.

L

The Ball no Question makes of Ayes and Noes,
 But Right or Left, as strikes the Player, goes;
 And He that toss'd Thee down into the Field,
He knows about it all—*HE* knows—*HE* knows!

LI

The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ,
 Moves on: nor all thy Piety nor Wit
 Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
 Nor all thy Tears wash out a Word of it.

LII

And that inverted Bowl we call The Sky,
Whereunder crawling coop't we live and die,
Lift not thy hands to It for help—for It
Rolls impotently on as Thou or I.

LIII

With Earth's first Clay They did the Last Man's knead,
And then of the Last Harvest sow'd the Seed:
Yea, the first Morning of Creation wrote
What the Last Dawn of Reckoning shall read.

LIV

I tell Thee this—When starting from the Goal,
Over the shoulders of the flaming Foal
Of Heav'n Parwín and Mushtarí they flung,
In my predestin'd Plot of Dust and Soul

Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám

FIRST

LV

The Vine had struck a Fibre; which about
If clings my Being—let the Súfi flout;
Of my Base Metal may be filed a Key,
That shall unlock the Door he howls without.

LVI

And this I know: whether the one True Light
Kindle to Love, or Wrath-consume me quite,
One Glimpse of It within the Tavern caught
Better than in the Temple lost outright.

LVII

Oh, Thou, who didst with Pitfall and with Gin
Beset the Road I was to wander in,
Thou wilt not with Predestination round
Enmesh me, and impute my Fall to Sin?

EDITION

Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám

LVIII

Oh, Thou, who Man of baser Earth didst make,
And who with Eden didst devise the Snake ;
For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man
Is blacken'd, Man's Forgiveness give—and take !

* * * * *

KÚZA-NÁMA

LIX

LISTEN again. One evening at the Close
Of Ramazán, ere the better Moon arose,
In that old Potter's Shop I stood alone
With the clay Population round in Rows.

Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám

FIRST

LX

And, strange to tell, among that Earthen Lot
Some could articulate, while others not :

And suddenly one more impatient cried—
“Who *is* the Potter, pray, and who the Pot?”

LXI

Then said another—“Surely not in vain
My Substance from the common Earth was ta'en,
That He who subtly wrought me into Shape
Should stamp me back to common Earth again.”

LXII

Another said — “Why, ne'er a peevish Boy,
Would break the Bowl from which he drank in Joy ;
Shall He that *made* the Vessel in pure Love
And Fanny, in an after Rage destroy !”

LXIII

None answer'd this; but after Silence spake
A Vessel of a more ungainly Make:

“They sneer at me for leaning all awry;
What! did the Hand then of the Potter shake?”

LXIV

Said one—“Folks of a surly Tapster tell,
And daub his Visage with the Smoke of Hell;

They talk of some strict Testing of us—Pish!
He's a Good Fellow, and 't will all be well.”

LXV

Then said another, with a long-drawn sigh,
“My Clay with long oblivion is gone dry:

But, fill me with the old familiar Juice,
Methinks I might recover by-and-bye!”

Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám

FIRST

LXVI

So while the Vessels one by one were speaking,
One spied the little Crescent all were seeking:
And then they jogg'd each other, "Brother! Brother!
Hark to the Porter's Shoulder-knot a-creaking!"

* * * * *

LXVII

Ah, with the Grape my fading Life provide,
And wash my Body whence the Life has died,
And in a Windingsheet of Vine-leaf wrapt,
So bury me by some sweet Garden-side.

LXVIII

That ev'n my buried Ashes such a Snare
Of Perfume shall fling up into the Air,
 As not a True Believer passing by
But shall be overtaken unaware.

LXIX

Indeed the Idols I have loved so long
Have done my Credit in Men's Eye much wrong :
 Have drown'd my Honour in a shallow Cup,
And sold my Reputation for a Song.

LXX

Indeed, indeed, Repentance oft before
I swore—but was I sober when I swore ?
 And then and then came Spring, and Rose-in-hand
My thread-bare Penitence apieces tore.

Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám

FIRST

LXXI

And much as Wine has play'd the Infidel,
And robb'd me of my Robe of Honour—well,
I often wonder what the Vintners buy
One half so precious as the Goods they sell.

LXXII

Alas, that Spring should vanish with the Rose!
That Youth's sweet-scented Manuscript should close!
The Nightingale that in the Branches sang,
Ah, whence, and whither flown again, who knows!

LXXIII

Ah Love! could thou and I with Fate conspire
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
Would not we shatter it to bits—and then
Re-mould it nearer to the Heart's Desire!

LXXIV

Ah, Moon of my Delight who know'st no wane,
The Moon of Heav'n is rising once again :

How oft hereafter rising shall she look
Through this same Garden after me — in vain !

LXXV

And when Thyself with shining Foot shalt pass
Among the Guests Star-scatter'd on the Grass,

And in thy joyous Errand reach the Spot
Where I made one — turn down an empty Glass !

TAMÁM SHUD

Notes

[*The references are, except in the first note only, to the stanzas of the Fourth Edition.*]

(STANZA I.) Flinging a Stone into the Cup was the signal for "To Horse!" in the Desert.

(II.) The "*False Dawn*;" *Subhi Kūzib*, a transient Light on the Horizon about an hour before the *Subhi sādik*, or True Dawn; a well-known Phenomenon in the East.

(IV.) New Year. Beginning with the Vernal Equinox, it must be remembered; and (howsoever the old Solar Year is practically superseded by the clumsy *Lunar* Year that dates from the Mohammedan Hijra) still commemorated by a Festival that is said to have been appointed by the very Jamshyd whom Omar so often talks of, and whose yearly Calendar he helped to rectify.

"The sudden approach and rapid advance of the Spring," says Mr. Binning, "are very striking. Before the Snow is well off the Ground, the Trees burst into Blossom, and the Flowers start from the Soil. At *Now Rooz* (*their* New Year's Day) the Snow was lying in patches on the Hills and in the shaded Vallies,

Notes

while the Fruit-trees in the Garden were budding beautifully, and green Plants and Flowers springing up on the Plains on every side —

‘And on old Hyems’ Chin and icy Crown
An odorous Chaplet of sweet Summer buds
Is, as in mockery, set.’—

Among the Plants newly appear’d I recognized some Acquaintances I had not seen for many a Year : among these, two varieties of the Thistle; a coarse species of the Daisy, like the Horse-gowan; red and white Clover; the Dock; the blue Corn-flower; and that vulgar Herb the Dandelion rearing its yellow crest on the Banks of the Water-courses.” The Nightingale was not yet heard, for the Rose was not yet blown : but an almost identical Blackbird and Woodpecker helped to make up something of a North-country Spring.

“The White Hand of Moses.” Exodus iv. 6; where Moses draws forth his Hand—not, according to the Persians, “*leprous as Snow*,”—but *white*, as our May-blossom in Spring perhaps. According to them also the Healing Power of Jesus resided in his Breath.

(V.) Iram, planted by King Shaddád, and now sunk somewhere in the Sands of Arabia. Jamshyd’s Seven-ring’d Cup was typical of the 7 Heavens, 7 Planets, 7 Seas, &c., and was a *Divining Cup*.

(VI.) *Pehlevi*, the old Heroic *Sanskrit* of Persia. Háfiz

Notes

also speaks of the Nightingale's *Pehlevi*, which did not change with the People's.

I am not sure if the fourth line refers to the Red Rose looking sickly, or to the Yellow Rose that ought to be Red; Red, White, and Yellow Roses all common in Persia. I think that Southey, in his Common-Place Book, quotes from some Spanish author about the Rose being White till 10 o'clock; "Rosa Perfecta" at 2; and "perfecta incarnada" at 5.

(X.) Rustum, the "Hercules" of Persia, and Zál his Father, whose exploits are among the most celebrated in the *Sháhnáma*. Hátim Tai, a well-known type of Oriental Generosity.

(XIII.) A Drum—beaten outside a Palace.

(XIV.) That is, the Rose's Golden Centre.

(XVIII.) Persepolis: call'd also *Takht-i-Jamshyd*—THE THRONE OF JAMSHYD, "*King Splendid*," of the mythical *Pesh-dádian* Dynasty, and supposed (according to the *Sháhnáma*) to have been founded and built by him. Others refer it to the Work of the Genie King, Ján Ibn Ján—who also built the Pyramids—before the time of Adam.

BAHRÁM GÚR—*Bahram of the Wild Ass*—a Sassanian Sovereign—had also his Seven Castles (like the King of Bohemia!) each of a different Colour: each with a Royal Mistress within; each of whom tells him a Story, as told in one of the most famous Poems of Persia, written by Amír Khusraw: all these Sevens also figuring (according to Eastern Mysticism) the

Notes

Seven Heavens; and perhaps the Book itself that Eighth, into which the mystical Seven transcend, and within which they revolve. The Ruins of Three of those Towers are yet shown by the Peasantry; as also the Swamp in which the Bahráṁ sunk, like the Master of Ravenswood, while pursuing his *Gár*.

*The Palace that to Heav'n his pillars threw,
And Kings the forehead on his threshold drew—
I saw the solitary Ringdove there,
And "Coo, coo, coo," she cried; and "Coo, coo, coo."*

This Quatrain Mr. Binning found, among several of Háfiz and others, inscribed by some stray hand among the ruins of Persepolis. The Ringdove's ancient *Pehlevi* *Coo, Coo, Coo*, signifies also in Persian "*Where? Where? Where?*" In Attár's "Bird-parliament" she is reproved by the Leader of the Birds for sitting still, and for ever harping on that one note of lamentation for her lost Yúsuf.

Apropos of Omar's Red Roses in Stanza xix, I am reminded of an old English Superstition, that our Anemone Pulsatilla, or purple "Pasque Flower" (which grows plentifully about the Fleam Dyke, near Cambridge), grows only where Danish Blood has been spilt.

(XXI.) A thousand years to each Planet.

(XXXI.) Saturn, Lord of the Seventh Heaven.

(XXXII.) ME-AND-THEE: some dividual Existence or Personality distinct from the Whole.

Notes

(XXXVII.) One of the Persian Poets — Attár, I think — has a pretty story about this. A thirsty Traveller dips his hand into a Spring of Water to drink from. By-and-by comes another who draws up and drinks from an earthen Bowl, and then departs, leaving his Bowl behind him. The first Traveller takes it up for another draught; but is surprised to find that the same Water which had tasted sweet from his own hand tastes bitter from the earthen Bowl. But a Voice — from Heaven, I think — tells him the clay from which the Bowl is made was once *Man*; and, into whatever shape renewed, can never lose the bitter flavour of Mortality.

(XXXIX.) The custom of throwing a little Wine on the ground before drinking still continues in Persia, and perhaps generally in the East. Mons. Nicolas considered it “une signe de libéralité, et en même temps un avertissement que le buveur doit vider sa coupe jusqu’à la dernière goutte.” Is it not more likely an ancient Superstition; a Libation to propitiate Earth, or make her an Accomplice in the illicit Revel? Or, perhaps, to divert the Jealous Eye by some sacrifice of superfluity, as with the Ancients of the West? With Omar we see something more is signified; the precious Liquor is not lost, but sinks into the ground to refresh the dust of some poor Wine-worshipper foregone.

Thus Háfiz, copying Omar in so many ways: “When thou drinkest Wine pour a draught on the ground. Wherefore fear the Sin which brings to another Gain?”

Notes

(XLIII.) According to one beautiful Oriental Legend, Azrael accomplishes his mission by holding to the nostril an Apple from the Tree of Life.

This and the two following Stanzas would have been withdrawn, as somewhat *de trop*, from the Text, but for advice which I least like to disregard.

(LI.) From Máh to Máhi; from Fish to Moon.

(LVI.) A Jest, of course, at his Studies. A curious mathematical Quatrain of Omar's has been pointed out to me; the more curious because almost exactly parallel'd by some Verses of Doctor Donne's, that are quoted in Izaak Walton's Lives! Here is Omar: "You and I are the image of a pair of compasses; though we have two heads (sc. our *feet*) we have one body; when we have fixed the centre for our circle, we bring our heads (sc. *feet*) together at the end." Dr. Donne: —

"If we be two, we two are so
As stiff twin-compasses are two;
Thy Soul, the fixt foot, makes no show
To move, but does if the other do.
And though thine in the centre sit,
Yet when my other far does roam,
Thine leans and hearkens after it,
And grows erect as mine comes home.
Such thou must be to me, who must
Like the other foot obliquely run;

Notes

Thy firmness makes my circle just,
And me to end where I begun."

(LIX.) The Seventy-two Religions supposed to divide the World, *including* Islamism, as some think: but others not.

(LX.) Alluding to Sultan Mahmūd's Conquest of India and its dark people.

(LXVIII.) *Fānūsī khiyāl*, a Magic-lantern still used in India; the cylindrical Interior being painted with various Figures, and so lightly poised and ventilated as to revolve round the lighted Candle within.

(LXX.) A very mysterious Line in the Original:—

O dānad O dānad O dānad O —

breaking off something like our Wood-pigeon's Note, which she is said to take up just where she left off.

(LXXV.) Parwīn and Mushtarī — The Pleiads and Jupiter.

(LXXXVII.) This Relation of Pot and Potter to Man and his Maker figures far and wide in the Literature of the World, from the time of the Hebrew Prophets to the present; when it may finally take the name of "Pot theism," by which Mr. Carlyle ridiculed Sterling's "Pantheism." *My* Sheikh, whose knowledge flows in from all quarters, writes to me:—

"Apropos of old Omar's Pots, did I ever tell you the sentence I found in 'Bishop Pearson on the Creed'? 'Thus are we wholly at the disposal of His will, and our present and future

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“The Pot calls a bystander to be a witness to his bad treatment. The woman says, ‘If, by Proserpine, instead of all this ‘testifying’ (comp. Cuddie and his mother in ‘Old Mortality’!) you would buy yourself a rivet, it would show more sense in you!’ The Scholiast explains *echinus* as ἄγγος τι ἐκ κεράμων.”

Notes

One more illustration for the oddity's sake from the "Autobiography of a Cornish Rector," by the late James Hamley Tregenna. 1871.

"There was one old Fellow in our company — he was so like a Figure in the 'Pilgrim's Progress' that Richard always called him the 'ALLEGORY,' with a long white beard — a rare Appendage in those days — and a Face the colour of which seemed to have been baked in, like the Faces one used to see on Earthenware Jugs. In our Country-dialect Earthenware is called 'Clome'; so the Boys of the Village used to shout after him — 'Go back to the Potter, old Clome-face, and get baked over again.' For the 'Allegory,' though shrewd enough in most things, had the reputation of being '*sift-baked*,' i. e., of weak intellect."

(XC.) At the Close of the Fasting Month, Ramazán (which makes the Musulman unhealthy and unamiable), the first Glimpse of the New Moon (who rules their division of the Year) is looked for with the utmost Anxiety, and hailed with Acclamation. Then it is that the Porter's Knot may be heard — toward the *Cellar*. Omar has elsewhere a pretty Quatrain about the same Moon: —

"Be of Good Cheer — the sullen Month will die,
And a young Moon requite us by and by:
Look how the Old one, meagre, bent, and wan
With Age and Fast, is fainting from the Sky!"



